



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Roger Marshall

Joint Environment and Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee Hearing *An Examination of Federal Flood Maps in a Changing Climate*

February 27, 2020

Thank you for holding this joint Subcommittee hearing, Chairwoman Sherrill and Chairman Foster. I believe this is the first time the Environment Subcommittee has convened since you were appointed Chairwoman, so welcome to the subcommittee and I look forward to working with you.

I want to express my appreciation for this Committee's focus on improving our preparedness in a changing climate. We have held hearings on all kinds of extreme weather – from windstorms to hurricanes to weather prediction models. Policy that helps protect lives and property is a responsibility that should be at the top of every Member of Congress' priority list.

Today's hearing is another chance to discuss a type of extreme weather event and how we are preparing to lessen the damage and effects it causes.

Flood events occur in every state and territory and cause an average of 80 deaths per year. It's easy to see how coastal areas like Florida or New Jersey are susceptible, but these events also have a great impact on agriculture, food supply, and crop insurance for inland states like Kansas.

In 2019, Kansas saw one of the worst years of extensive flooding with at least \$15 million of infrastructure damage and \$3.8 million in federal flood insurance claims. It's impossible to gauge just how much damage this has caused on topsoil loss, land realignment, and other factors that affect the day to day life of the agriculture community.

What we do know is that 13 dams were damaged and well systems were overwhelmed so much that trucks are still delivering up to 40,000 gallons of clean water every day to northeast Kansas.

But as the saying goes: from challenge comes opportunity. The Kansas Department of Agriculture, already underway with a project to map the state's floodplains with 2D technology, has used the 2019 floods as a way of validating their models and gaining trust among communities.

They have also spread more awareness of the state's Base Flood Elevation Portal, a collaborative project that allows users to draw a polygon for their property and see BFE value, as well as the approximate lowest adjacent grade value based on LiDAR.

This type of tool is extremely helpful because it gives property owners an idea of their chances to obtain a Letter of Map Revision before they spend money on a surveyor.

I look forward to hearing Mr. Ryan Branfort's testimony on how similar technologies and services, along with geospatial data, can help improve the flood mapping of FEMA and other federal agencies.

I also look forward to hearing from all of our witness on the progress of the USGS 3-D Elevation Program, or 3DEP, as it moves forward with the goal of completing a nationwide LiDAR mapping by 2023. 67% of the nation has been completed and more than 600 different applications will benefit from this enhance elevation data, including flood risk management and precision agriculture.

The idea that a federal program can satisfy multiple needs and be used in so many different ways is what every program should strive to achieve. If we are going to spend millions of taxpayer dollars in a multi-year coordinated effort, I hope the final result is not a simple one trick pony.

I want to again thank our witnesses for being here and I look forward to hearing your testimony. Thank you Madam Chair and I yield back the balance of my time.